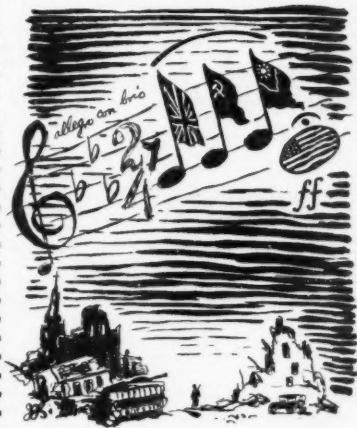


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The American RECORD GUIDE

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Edited by

PETER HUGH REED

August, 1945 • VOL. XI, No. 12

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THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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The American RECORD GUIDE

August, 1945 • VOL. XI, No. 12

Formerly The American Music Lover

Editorial Notes

Letters from readers in the Army and Navy continue to come to us from all over the world. The quest for good music continues in every corner of the globe. Judging from what the boys tell us, an unusual effort has been made to provide our fighting forces with good music on records or via radio in almost every place, and the latest communication on music for the men stationed in such an out of the way spot as Iran bears this out.

Writing from Khorramshahr, Iran, Cpl. Leonard Kalweit says: "I can say very little about musical life here. However, there is a symphony hour broadcast daily over the Army Expeditionary Station here from two to three every afternoon. Unfortunately, I am always at work at this time, so I have not been able to hear it. But soon we will go on summer schedule, just working until 1 P.M., then perhaps I will be able to take these programs in, as I did last summer. There is one program broadcast on Tuesday nights, but there would seem to have been a conspiracy to prevent my hearing it for the past month or two. Recently, I visited the Recreation Center in Teheran for a week. They broadcast the symphony hour from eight to nine in the mornings there, so practically no one can hear it, as everyone starts to work around seven-thirty or eight, but I was able to hear it once in the Mess Hall while eating breakfast. I remember listening to Schubert's *Unfinished* while eating fried eggs. I found out that the Teheran Symphony (about 40 pieces) had given a concert a day too late for me. They have them in the afternoon, as most of the musicians have to get their café jobs in the evenings. I heard a program consisting

of the *Peer Gynt Suite* and *Scheherazade*, among other things. I understand the conductor is an Iranian. The quality of the orchestra is not too good, but by now I have practically no standards for criticism. Another highlight of the Teheran trip was a dance recital by a woman who calls herself Seiko Sarina (I understand, however, she is an American); she specializes in dances of the East. I did not think she had much technique, but I'm no authority on these dances. It was a novelty, however.

"The broadcasts I mentioned above are recordings of symphony concerts of the major orchestras of the United States. In my estimation, some are good and some are not. I particularly liked an all-Wagner program by Toscanini (he excels in Wagner), a fine one by Rodzinski, Helen Traubel and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, and some—but not all—of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Those of the Boston Symphony are usually excellent. I'm sorry I cannot say the same for my hometown orchestra, the Cleveland; I think it has suffered from too many conductors. I'm hoping they will get another permanent conductor; I wish they would get Szell.

"While at Ahwaz, where I was stationed for seven months. I visited the radio station several times. They let me play some of the symphony concerts on the machine they had there, which was excellent. Needless to say, this was enjoyable to me.

"I understand they used to have a program of classical music here at Khorramshahr, but it has been discontinued. I spoke to the Information and Education Officer about starting a program again;

he referred me to Special Services. I handled record programs at Fort Knox in the States from 1942 to 1944. I would be glad to do something here, if we could get records, equipment, and a place to have the program. I know we'd have a good audience. We have a tentative promise from the Chaplain to use the Chapel; maybe by the time you get this we'll be all set."

* * *

In the past two months we have had news of the loss of many old friends and readers in various parts of the war-front—more particularly at Okinawa. That our old friend and colleague, Cpl. Philip Miller, came through that hideous ordeal intact has been a cause for rejoicing. He contributes an article this month in which he gathers together some thoughts on the appreciation of music, conceived while under fire.

Another old friend and colleague, 1st Lt. Harold Schonberg, is back in the States after serving in the invasion of France. Hospitalized until recently for a compound fracture of the right leg, sustained in a parachute landing several weeks before Germany capitulated, Lt. Schonberg is now recovering in the country. He promises to tell us of some of the musical experiences he had in Paris.

The boys in Europe are still endeavoring to buy up all the fine recordings they can get to ship home. Sgt. Robert Plugfelder, a Philadelphian, who sent us the *Pelléas* recording, has forwarded us an-

other batch of records which we hope to be able to talk about in subsequent issues. And Lt. Lansing Bailey (a Californian) tells us that he too has sent us a bunch of French recordings. Not all the boys have been successful in getting their purchases sent home. Pvt. Leo Goldstein (of Chicago) is back in the States after serving in Italy ever since its occupation by the allies, but the major portion of the collection of recordings he acquired is still in Italy awaiting shipment.

One G. I. stationed in Germany writes us that no new recordings were issued there after 1943. The eternal quest for good music has been pursued by a lot of the boys in Germany but with very little luck. As one writes us, "what with the thorough bombing of cities there are few record shops intact, and most of the German store people are reluctant to sell to the American soldier."

Someday soon, we all hope, our boys will land in Japan, and we will be eager to hear of the experiences the questing record fans have in that "cock-eyed" country. Probably, if they survive the terrific bombing, a lot of German recordings will turn up, and we would not be surprised to hear of some American ones.

* * *

We were on the press when the good news of the Japanese surrender came. This delayed publication a whole week, but we have no complaints to make; we hope our readers will feel the same way about this delay.

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"WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE"

By Cpl. Philip L. Miller

We are pleased to present this searching article by our former associate editor, who was with us from the inception of this magazine until he went into the Army in 1942.—Ed.

Remember the old saw about the tree falling in a wood where there is no ear to hear the crash? I will leave it to the scientists to say whether or not the fall produces a sound but put the question in reverse and I can speak with experience. One who has known music to the extent that I have can often hear it in silence — nay, there are times when he cannot help hearing it against the most fantastic counterpoint of noise. I have spent more than one night in a foxhole, listening to a program of my old favorites. To the man in the next hole, of course, there was no sound but the noises of battle. In fact, if he and I could be together in Carnegie Hall it is possible that even then, though the Boston Symphony were playing, he would hear only sound; for the chances are that he has never experienced music. "Whereto serve ears if that there be no sound?" — and whereto music to one who hears only with his ears?

Having now, for the first time in my life, passed an all but music-less year (indeed for some months I have not heard so much as a non-popular record), I find myself spending my hours of inaction in sorting out past experiences, re-evaluating long familiar music and poetry, and often finding surprising things which had previously passed me by. Perhaps when I return to my old activities again, I will have a clearer conception of what constitutes art, and above all what makes for artistic distinction. Meanwhile I can theorize.

A work of art, I believe, exists as such only in the response that it awakens. Its stature is determined by the greatness of that response. If we are enthusiastic over a work, then its value — as far as we are concerned — is in direct proportion to our enthusiasm. To us that is all that matters. In spite of technical analyses and the *sine qua non* of art. If a work awak-

ens this response in only one person it still has its importance.

The task of the artist is to awaken this response. This may be done by stating "what all have thought but none so well expressed," by confirming or denying something that is generally accepted as truth, or by a striking novelty. But even novelty must have a basis in or a connection with truth. Art is more than holding a mirror up to nature. But it must have some point of departure in nature, else it could never be understood. We understand only as our experience and imagination make understanding possible. And so appreciation, from Bach to Ellington, from Raphael to Dada, must proceed from some contact with experience. The pictorial arts are therefore the easiest for average man to approach, since no one goes through life with his eyes closed, while many can and do, hardly using their ears or their minds.

But appreciation is a growth; people don't suddenly come to understand music or painting as the apostles acquired the gift of tongues. Understanding rarely comes as the dropping of scales from the eyes. Even Saint Paul's conversion was not sudden, but the result of a long build-up, climaxed on the road to Damascus. On the other hand study and analysis are beneficial only as they are digested in the mind. The big problem of the listener is to establish his own set of values.

Art and Its Age

Art is a combination of technique and personality. Without the first no sound work is possible, even though to some extent expression may come by instinct. But without personality art is sterile. A true work must express something of the spirit of its time—and through its time, of all times—as experienced and interpreted by the artist, for the artist can be what he is only in his own day. Every masterpiece must in this sense be "dated"—while at the same time it belongs to all ages—for it can come into existence only by the genius of its creator working through his thought processes and emotions or beliefs. And these again are founded on experi-

ence and imagination—the latter growing out of the former.

The question of what makes for distinction in art is in general an impossible one, though in individual cases it can be answered. In the very nature of things there are as many answers as there are distinguished works, since distinction is not repeated. To a large extent it is a comparative thing. We may come to know an artist or a school of artists by one work which strikes us forcibly, but on acquaintance we may find that the same thing has been better done elsewhere. Often what carries us away at first will fail to stand up under repeated scrutiny. We must be able to identify ourselves with the work under consideration; and, as in life, so in art, we are continually growing away from certain viewpoints.

Values Must Endure

If everything has been said on a certain subject there is no need for returning for discussion. If we have eaten the pie there is no further use in holding the plate. Only such works as continuously offer us more are worth coming back to. The musician who doesn't give us in each performance something he has never quite given us before is not worth repeated hearings. Perhaps then the great key to distinction is understatement—the art of implying more than we say, perhaps implying different things to different people or on different occasions—the art of "selection and restraint." By this criterion the minor artists are often the greatest. for a two-page song can sometimes say more to us than a whole opera.

As I have said, a work of art may be a confirmation or a negation of a generally accepted truth. It may also be an affirmative statement of a desire or a belief. The gentle positiveness of such a song as Richard Strauss' *Morgen* (to a poem by John Henry Mackay) must certainly account for a good deal of its hold upon the imagination and the affections of the sensitive listener. Or, in an Elinor Wylie poem beautifully set to music by Randall Thompson, no small degree of the charm is obtained by the simple directness of

the statement "We shall walk in velvet shoes." On a very different level is a song that enjoyed a considerable vogue after the first World War, Geoffrey O'Hara's *There Is No Death*. Appearing when it did, and stating so positively in both words and music what so many people wanted to hear and believe—"I tell you they have not died"—the song could sell itself on its very lack of subtlety. Ascending once more to higher art, it is a similar positiveness that has made Handel's *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth* the universal classic that it is.

"If It Were Only So"

But in the case of the Handel aria there is another angle. *The Messiah* is known and loved by many who do not believe the things it so definitely states. The appeal to these people is not always entirely musical: they may say to themselves "It would be wonderful if only it were so," which is in itself an endlessly fascinating idea. This to me accounts also for some of the beauty of Gluck's *Orfeo*. No one could possibly believe in the bliss of the Elysian Fields as here depicted, and the very impossibility of such serenity brings tears to the eyes. Such a life would not appeal to us even if we could have it, but we like to play with the idea. Again the *Evening Prayer* in *Hänsel und Gretel* affects the adult, who has long ceased to believe in the story, in an emotional way that the child could hardly grasp. Such faith becomes more beautiful when we know that it is an illusion.

Or the appeal of a work may be in absolute negation—saying exactly the opposite of what the author means to convey. A fine example of this is Housman's poem in *The Shropshire Lad*, *Be Still, My Soul*. "Let us endure an hour," the poet tells himself, "and see injustice done." And he seeks to evade the responsibility in his longing for a return to the rest that was his before he was born. But his very restlessness tells us that he cannot escape it, and his longing for sleep and oblivion assures us that he cannot be quiet while such conditions exist.

These are types of understatement, be-

cause they send our minds far beyond the things they say. In this sense a symphony or an epic must be understood too, sometimes because its subject is so big that it cannot be fully stated—as in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, where even a vast orchestra, a vocal quartet and chorus are not sufficient to convey the composer's intentions in their full perfection. Even Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony*, in its frank and lavish expression of a colossal grief, may be said to be understated. Everyone understands the subject, and everyone can at some time or other apply it to himself. But not all of us like to revel very often in such emotions as these, which certainly in themselves could not be called subtle.

Religious Art

Perhaps the broadest field for understatement lies in religious art. The grief and pain in the face and body of a Van Dyck *Crucifixion* is gripping because it sums up a familiar story; no explanation is necessary. In one of the loveliest of the songs in the Wolf *Spanisches Liederbuch*, the simple stage direction "Der heilige Josef singt" is enough to establish a mood, and we understand at once the anxiety with which Mary's husband encourages her on the way to Bethlehem. Indeed the very word Bethlehem is all we need to set our imaginations to play, as Dorothy Parker has so beautifully proved in her surprising little poem about the servant girl.

Religious emotions are a part of most of us, whatever may be our creed. Therefore we respond to art founded on these emotions. Each of us will rise to other expressions as the ideas or emotions for which they stand are developed in us, or are ripe for development. This is equally true of non-emotional art. Purely intellectual works will appeal to us according to our intellectual growth and capacities. Art will enrich life as life itself unfolds the understanding of art. To the sensitive artist the two are indivisible. It is the overtones of life that make great art, which is another way of saying distinguished art.



ARTHUR BLISS

By W. R. Anderson

We English respect Arthur Bliss the more because he was able to work through the "Twaddling Twenties" of this agitated century, to that discipline of the instinct and warming of the intellect that has produced a series, not profuse, but choice, of works like his *Clarinet Quintet*, his *Piano Concerto*, and the settings of old lyrics known by the title of the first—*Lie Strewn the White Flocks*. It may be convenient if I list what seem to be his most significant things since the days when we were still suffering ("we" means both composers and listeners) from the hangover of World War I, plus Stravinsky and the French fantods of "Les Six":

Hymn to Appollo, and *Introduction and Allegro*—both for orchestra (1926). *Quintet* (oboe and strings—written for Mrs. Coolidge) (1927). *Pastoral*, for chorus (text from Jonson, Fletcher, Nichols, etc.) (1928). *Symphony—Morning Heroes* (for orator, chorus and orchestra) (1930). *Clarinet Quintet* (1931) (Recorded, English Decca—K. 780/83; F. Thur-

ston and Griller Quartet). *Viola Sonata* (1932) (Recorded, English Decca—X. 233/35; Watson Forbes and Myers Foggin). *Music for Strings* (1935) (Recorded, H.M.V.—DB. 3257/59; Victor set 464; Boulton and B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra). Film music—H. G. Wells' *Shape of Things to Come* (1935); Suite from this (recorded, English Decca K. 810/11, 817—domestic Decca 25606/608; Bliss and the London Symphony Orchestra). *Checkmate*—Ballet (1937); and Suite from this. *Piano Concerto* (1938); written for the New York World's Fair (recorded, H.M.V.—C. 3348/52; Solomon and B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Boulton). *String Quartet* (1941), for Mrs. Coolidge (recorded English Decca, K. 1091/94; Griller Quartet).

Bliss has developed strongly in the last twenty years, since he returned home after less than three years in California. Now fifty-four, he is among the most mature British composers, and the most individual, never having dwelt in folk ways—wherein, I am convinced, a good many of our writers have wasted some time: not excluding Vaughan Williams

* Mr. Anderson, who herewith presents another in his valued series of articles on British composers, is an eminent English critic on the staff of *The Gramophone* and *The London Musical Times*.

himself. Bliss has a gusto, a flair, a panache: dramatic, impassioned feeling, perhaps never of the very deepest—I doubt that this is in him; but immensely beyond anything we could have hoped for a score of years ago. He has avoided the worst European extremist pitfalls; nor is he likely to spin too cerebrally: though he is distinctive in many technical uses, fond—for example—of elaborate counterpoint, and threatening, sometimes, a fugue. He had, as far as the Mus. B. degree of Cambridge University, a good technical training, and he delights in the enjoyment of its fruits, as a skillful workman ought.

He manipulates strings grandly. *Music for Strings* shows the old concerto influence—contrapuntal writing, with an Elgarian breadth, one of the qualities we notice so often in the best of our composers. It can be argued (as Edwin Evans has thoughtfully advanced) that this element, which I think had two sides of eloquence and lyricism, is not so much specifically a trait of the one composer, as a national quality, at its best in the favorite Elgarian word *nobilmente*, and at its worst in a certain smugness (as foreigners are apt to call it); but whether this two-sided element is innately national, or more truly, temperamental-Elgarian, it is well marked in Bliss and in almost all our middle-aged generation—few in number though these composers are: an inevitable consequence of the last war.

Characteristics in this *Music for Strings*, and in most of Bliss's work, are the quick changes of phrase and feeling, rather than the older style, long-drawn building; the comparative mildness of the harmonic asperities; the frequent bursts of fervor—perhaps a little too much the easy servant of fluency, which is still a small danger with Bliss. I notice, however, that in lecturing to the Royal Institute in 1934, Bliss quoted Mephistophele's advice to the student:

"All theory, my dear young friend,
is gray;

And green the golden tree of life."

"There is far too much gray," commented Bliss, "and far too little green, in modern music."

And he goes on to sum up his creed in phrases which, in part, I quote: "I believe that the foundation of all music is emotion, and without the capacity for deep and subtle emotion a composer employs only half the resources of his medium. I believe that this emotion should be called into being by the sudden awareness of actual beauty seen, or by the vision of beauty vividly apprehended. I believe that the emotion . . . should be solidified and fixed by presenting it in a form absolutely fitting to it, and to it alone." His goal, he says, is "to try for an emotion truly and clearly felt, and caught forever in a formal perfection." He is aware of the slowness of human progress towards the ideal; "but the actual slow progress . . . gives me the keenest joy and excitement." Every piece he writes shows that: the music never sounds fagged or factitious. He admits what we all realize, about the best moderns—that other personalities must mingle in theirs; "one hopes to work oneself gradually more and more to the front in one's efforts for clearly defined utterance, so that other personalities recede, and finally one is speaking for oneself." Sure it is we can hear, at times, Wagner, Strauss, Debussy, Puccini, *et al.* in pretty well any modern we like to listen to; but I do not feel that any of these influences hinders or weakens Bliss badly.

He believes that, we English being neither highly sensuous nor desperately logical, fiercely dramatic nor intensely vivacious, the quality that most marks our music is "its essentially poetic character": the nurture of Nature is in it. The best of Bliss' slow movements come near the center of his feeling—perhaps, apart from the folksy school, nearest (for my liking) of all modernism. Hear, for example, the slow movements of the *Viola Sonata* and the *Clarinet Quintet*.

Organic growth, rather than architectural build, is another characteristic of Bliss's—perhaps as well demonstrated as anywhere, in conjunction with the Elgarian or basic-British spirit, in *Music for Strings*. Maybe Bliss' directness of speech is at times weakened, in this work, by the slightly wilful pressing on a not very

strong rhythmic pattern: this tinge comes obviously from the Stravinskian hang-over, not yet quite dissipated from our midst, even after a generation. I have remarked before, I believe, upon the tendency of British composers to get a bit futile when they bustle willfully. The defect seems more prominent in the folkly composers; less so in the men like Bliss, who escaped that debilitation (as I consider it: but many of my compatriots would be grieved by such a designation). But Bliss's speech like his forms tends to grow organically; in this he has found what is worthwhile in the century's new harmonies, and wrought them into the harmony that he learned when he was studying for his Mus. B. The composer's integration was early shown as well as anywhere in *Morning Heroes* (early, that is, after the post-war waste: this dates from 1930). No music created around the idea of war can (I believe) be very great, but this work, which sets various poems, from Homer to Li-Tai-Po, Whitman to our own Wilfred Owen, comes as near as anything I know to rising to a great argument, and abiding a great arbitrament. Best in the choral sections, it reminds us that our foreign friends rarely know the best of our choralism; one reason why, I think, Elgar is not always enjoyed—because his oratorios and dramatic cantatas are so little known. I venture to insist that nobody fully knows Elgar, Bliss, or any Englishman, until he has absorbed the music for choirs; he may not always think greatly of it, but choral singing and writing are in the English blood, and should be reckoned with.

The chamber music I think most people will enjoy. I like a word of Hubert Foss's, about the *Viola Sonata*: "neo-Byronism," as regards its romanticism. If the ideas of the string quartet of 1941 may rarely be big, among its wide variety of spirits (a common characteristic of the composer in all his work) are some deep ones: the deeper the truer, I think. The slow movement holds a strong, grave, power, and the finale, like the first movement, has abundant spritely energy, richly caparisoned; and, as often with Bliss, the melodic element seems, here and else-

where, to be older and yet younger in spirit than the harmonic. Bliss, happily, remains young-hearted, a fact attested in every composition he writes. He has deepened in wisdom; and though we deplore the wasted time of that immediate post-last-war period, there is no composer now writing here about whose recovery we are more happy, none who has given us solidier grounds for satisfaction in his outlook and achievement in middle age.

BOOK REVIEW

THE TECHNIQUE OF CHORAL COMPOSITION. By Archibald T. Davison. Harvard University Press, 1945. 206 pp. Price \$3.00.

▲ Behind this book are thirty-six years of teaching experience in choral technique, for since 1909 Dr. Davison has been so engaged on the faculty of Harvard University. The achievements of such organizations as the Harvard University Choir, the Harvard Glee Club, and the Radcliffe Choral Society are due to this gifted man. What he has accomplished here is a treatise that should be invaluable to the composer and the student of choral composition. The author has provided scores of musical examples, which point up the essentials of his text. I should say that this book was a valuable and authoritative study of its subject. Choral writing has not been as extensive as it might have been in recent years; the English seem to have a better appreciation of choral composition than we Americans. The few worthwhile choral works that have appeared on records here have never met with the success of orchestral music. Dr. Davison's dedication to an American composer would seem to be worthwhile calling to the attention of the record companies; it reads: "To Randall Thompson, first among our native composers in the art of choral writing." It may seem strange to others, as it does to this reviewer, that Randall Thompson is not represented by one of

(Continued on page 328)



A NOTE ON RICHARD STRAUSS

by Neville d'Esterre

There was a time when Richard Strauss was widely proclaimed as one of the great masters. Critics of the highest eminence were calling him the heir to Richard Wagner (someone even bestowed upon him the title of Richard the Second); and Wagner, however degenerate his art may seem regarded in the light of pure idealism (of which, anyhow, most of us are incapable), was unquestionably a very great maker of music. For some of us, however, Strauss did not seem entitled to so glorious an appellation. He seemed to us to belong—interestingly enough, but still beyond dispute—not to the first rank, but to the second. In my youth I had been warned that Strauss was very great and very difficult to understand. So, in the beginning, to invert a famous epigram, I went to pray and remained to scoff. I could discover in Strauss neither greatness nor difficulty. I found ample cleverness, ample portentousness, a tremendous mock profundity. At the beginning, I was earnestly endeavoring to discern the revolutionary genius he was represented to be; and I was puzzled because, as time went

on, no such figure became visible. The truth dawned on me by degrees. There was no genius; there was no revolution; there was merely a big, glorified Meyerbeer, with Wagner, Berlioz and Liszt at the back of him, instead of Mozart and Beethoven. For a while he was my *bête noir*; but time softened by feelings against him, so that I could appreciate his occasional flashes of genuine inspiration; as, for example, in *Till Eulenspiegel*; certain sections of *Ein Heldenleben*; *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which, in my estimation, is the best of the Strauss tone-poems next to *Till*: two or three sections of *Salome*; *Ariadne auf Naxos*; *Rosenkavalier*; but more importantly in his lieder. But, even at his best, Strauss is not much above the level of Liszt; and he is no more the heir to Wagner, than Alfred Noyes is heir to Swinburne.

Strauss was once described by an eminent critic as a big, glorified Meyerbeer, and I do not think the description wholly unfair. For one thing, I rather approve of Meyerbeer, although my approval hardly amounts to admiration. Meyerbeer, at any

rate, is to my mind quite as stimulating as Strauss, and just as original. (That is, of course, when Strauss is working on the same lines as Meyerbeer). Neither of them ever had Wagner's easy mastery over the language of music. But Strauss, like Meyerbeer, has been a cheerful and enthusiastic innovator, enjoying and responding to plentiful moments of inspiration. Moments of inspiration, not long periods, and therefore a matter of enjoyment, rather than of agonizing labor. And those moments bring a similar joy to us when we become aware of their outcome. They come to us most felicitously out of what may properly be called a welter of rather dull, ordinary music, the significance of which is seldom as clear as it might be. They are sufficient in themselves to justify the whole conception. The Strauss tone-poems, from *Don Juan* to *Ein Heldenleben* (excepting *Tod und Verklärung* which does not wear well), abound in these moments of delight, and, if they contained nothing else, they should be great masterpieces, like the Mozart *Jupiter*, the Schubert *C major*, and the *Meistersinger* overture. But, unfortunately, they contain much else, and that much is not the stuff of which great masterpieces are made.

Strauss At His Best

Strauss, however, cannot be left at that. It is not in his tone-poems, or even in his operas, that the best of Strauss is revealed to us. Like Liszt, to whom otherwise he bears little resemblance as an artist, he is at his best as a writer of songs; and it is not only convenient, but right, to judge the songs of Richard Strauss, like those of Liszt and Schumann, and even those of Brahms and Schubert, quite apart from the rest of his work. For the technique of song-composition is quite distinct from that of the other familiar forms of music; and, for reasons that hardly need explaining, the spirit of the song, where the song is properly conceived, is also a thing apart. Greatness in this branch of music does not necessarily lead us to expect greatness in other directions; and one of the greatest of all the song composers, Hugo Wolf, achieved nothing very remark-

able away from the setting of poems to music.

A Great Song Composer

To me, at all events, Strauss figures as one of the truly great composers of songs; and, seeing how few there have been of these in the whole history of music, this is proper praise. Wagner, for example, composed, outside his operas, only one really great song, *Träume*. Beethoven, the song writer, is a very inferior person compared with the Beethoven of the symphonies, quartets, sonatas, and so on. Purcell, and Bach, and Handel never were songwriters in the correct sense of the form. Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky set words to music very neatly, but I cannot see that either went any more deeply into it than that, even in *Auf fliegeln des Gesanges* and *None but the lonely heart*. The master composers who really triumphed in this most difficult medium were Schubert, Schumann, Wolf and Brahms, voluminously, and, in lesser quantity, but still with great excellence, Berlioz and Liszt. Dvorak, Fauré and Grieg are also in the running; and these are all the great song-writers. And Strauss belongs, by every conceivable right, to the same company. If he had written nothing else besides *Heimliche Aufforderung* and *Morgen*, his title would be indisputable.

I like to regard the songs as the best, and therefore the true Strauss, and to think of him first in association with them. And, when I hear the tone-poems and the operas, this feeling of mine seems to receive full and practical confirmation. Those large, intricate works convey the impression to me of something that expands and develops away from the true self. I sit and listen with great enjoyment to lovely bits of Wagnerian music, and Brahmsian music, and Meyerbeerish music, and music that reminds me of Spohr, and Berlioz and that other Strauss of *Fledermaus* and *Zigeuner Baron*, varied with interludes (if such they may be called) of Reger-like padding, all very clever and contrapuntal but meaning precious little; but punctuated here and there (and "punctuated" is the right word) by

adorable evidences that the composer is actually the same person who has given us those exquisite songs. Nearly all these works are worth hearing, and worth hearing very often; just as most of Joseph Conrad's novels are worth reading very often, in spite of the verbosity of so much of his prose-poetry. For, when at length the best that is in those works has photographed itself on your mind, and become something that is fixed in the recollection, there abides with you the conception of a true artist, who, notwithstanding that he is less than the colossal Bachs, Beethovens, and Wagners, has never been false to his artistic ideals; and whose worst is nothing like so bad as the worst that Beethoven and Wagner allowed themselves to perpetuate. A writer, the late J. F. Runciman, declared once that Strauss began by pretending to a profundity he did not possess, and then descended to writing shamelessly for the gallery and the market. This writer was wrong. Strauss is merely the product of his period. The demand that created *New World* and *Pathétique* symphonies, and *Songs of Ecstasy*, and suchlike, created *Tod und Verklärung* and *Feuersnot* as well. While the musical world remained in the state of intoxication excited by the feverish swilling of heady Wagnerian vintages, such things had to be.

But Strauss gave us the songs; and the songs, like all the works of nature, are immortal in so far as it is given to us to comprehend immortality. When I go to hear one of the tone-poems, I like to keep those songs in mind. They serve as a kind of appetizer. Also they remind me that, even though the quality of the present blessings may be a little doubtful, something of the highest quality has flowed from the same source. Such thoughts tend to promote good relations between the listener and the music he is hearing.

There are few of the excellent recordings of Strauss's songs left in domestic

catalogues, but some of these may be reinstated in the near future. Flagstad's admirable recordings will undoubtedly be reissued, and it is to be hoped that those made by Elisabeth Schumann will be also. For Schumann was a noted interpreter of Strauss's songs—an artist associated closely with the composer, having toured with him in concert on more than one occasion.

Available Recordings

Allerseelen: Kirsten Flagstad (Victor disc 1726).

Allerseelen and *Zueignung*: Nelson Edly (Columbia disc 17185-D).

Des Dichters Abendgang and *Lied an meinen Sohn*: Marjorie Lawrence (Victor disc 17230).

Traum durch die Dämmerung: Norman Cordon (Victor disc 2165).

Highly commendable is the complete recording of *Rosenkavalier*, with the incomparable Lotte Lehmann at her best, and Elisabeth Schumann and Maria Olszewska (Victor set 196). Also praiseworthy is Marjorie Lawrence's recording of the final scene from *Salome* (Victor discs 8682/83).

Cut-Out Recordings Worth Acquiring

Ach, Lieb', ich muss nun scheiden and *Freundliche Vision*: Helge Roswaenge (Victor disc 1841).

All mein Gedanken; *Hat gesagt, bleibst nicht dabei*; *Schlechte's Wetter*; *Ständchen*: Elisabeth Schumann (Victor disc 7707).

Caecilie and *Seitdem dein Aug'*: Kirsten Flagstad (Victor disc 1967).

Heimkehr and *Caecilie*: Suzanne Sten (Columbia disc 17231-D).

Ich schwebe and *Traum durch die Dämmerung*: Elisabeth Schumann (Victor disc 14076).

Der Nacht and *Traum durch die Dämmerung*: Herbert Janssen (Victor 1930)





RECENT JAZZ RELEASES

By Val Fidanque

Jazz

Everybody Loves My Baby by Sidney De Paris' Blue Note Jazz Men. Sidney De Paris—trumpet; Vic Dickenson—trombone; Edmond Hall—clarinet; James P. Johnson—piano; Arthur Shirley—guitar; Sidney Catlett—drums (Blue Note 40). The number starts with De Paris' driving trumpet leading some rough ensemble playing, but this is soon succeeded by an excellent trombone solo and then by a cleanly played trumpet improvisation. Johnson's piano is interesting mainly because it shows how much his pupil, the late "Fats" Waller, owed to him. Hall's clarinet solo on this side is somewhat spoiled for me by his excessively harsh tone, but it must be admitted that his musical ideas are of the best. On the reverse, we have *Call of the Blues* which is the best medium tempo jazz that I've heard in many a moon. It is credited to and features De Paris almost all the way. His restrained muted choruses with the constant use of rubato give the listener a sense of great power held in reserve. Johnson's rolling boogie-woogie piano background and the relaxed but firmly based rhythm section also contribute a great deal to the success of the record. Dickenson, Shirley and

Hall take their turns at improvising and each one has something worthwhile to add. The record ends with some more great trumpet work by the leader.

Blue Horizon by Sydney Bechet's Blue Note Jazz Men. Sidney De Paris—trumpet; Vic Dickenson—trombone; Sydney Bechet—clarinet; Art Hodes—piano; George Foster—bass; Manzil Johnson—drums (Blue Note 43). This one is very blue and consists of Bechet almost exclusively, as the other five instruments are so much in the background that they can hardly be heard. In this case even for such an accomplished clarinetist, twelve inches of solo work turns out to be too much. The B side is *Muskrat Ramble*, a tune that is based on an old New Orleans march, and played here in brass band style. The trombone has a typically prominent part in the polyphony of the first chorus. After that the boys settle down as Dickenson, De Paris and Bechet each take a solo with effective support from the rhythm section. It ends with the usual New Orleans collective improvisation. For those unaccustomed to the style, this is not an easy side to like, but for collectors who want an example of modern New Orleans jazz, this is a good one.

Tonight I Shall Sleep—Tommy Dorsey with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra

(Victor 45-0002). This side of the Victor "Double Feature" is a successful experiment. Tommy's sweet trombone fits in well with the minor key mood of the composition and Johnny Hodges' alto sax solo is distinctly worthwhile. On the reverse, however, the Duke finds himself out of place playing a noisy jump number with the Dorsey band.

Mood To Be Woood—Duke Ellington and his Orchestra (Victor 20-1670). This showpiece for Hodges' highly expressive, vocalized saxophone style is not quite as satisfying as the longer version that the band plays at concerts, but it is still top-drawer Ellington.

Little Jazz—Artie Shaw and his Orchestra (Victor 20-1668). "Little Jazz" is trumpeter Roy Eldridge's nickname among musicians. In this well-controlled jump number, which was written for him, he shows why he is conceded to be one of the top men on the instrument. *September Song* on the reverse is a fine arrangement of Kurt Weill's attractive melody of several seasons ago from *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Aside from a small amount of solo work by Artie, this piece is carefully arranged, but the players manage to retain a certain ease and freedom that is a characteristic of all good jazz.

It's The Talk of The Town—Coleman Hawkins' Orchestra (Capitol 205). This is the most successful extended improvisation by the great tenor sax man since his record of *Body and Soul* (Bluebird 30-0825). He takes this one right through without once playing the original melody; yet to anyone who knows the melody it is just as much there as is the subtle rhythm section or the piano accompaniment. Hawkins' velvety tone and his melodic inventiveness on these slow numbers has never been approached by anyone else. In *Stuffy*, on the other side, he plays in his sharp rhythmic style and shares the solos with Allan Ruess on the guitar and "Sir Charles" Thompson on the piano.

Popular

I Want A Little Doregie—Lena Horne and The Phil Moore Four (Victor 45-

0001). Sometimes Lena is a vocalist who needs to be seen to be enjoyed, as in her disappointing vocal on *I Didn't Know About You* (Victor 20-1616) but here, with tasteful backing from this instrumental quartet, she does a swell job on a novelty tune.

I'm A Shy Guy—The King Cole Trio (Capitol 208). Pianist Nat "King" Cole takes most of the honors on this number, which is primarily vocal but also has good piano and guitar solos. Unlike most popular lyrics, these make sense and the whole thing hangs together extremely well. On the reverse, *I Tho't You Ought To Know* finds Cole in a more sentimental mood.

Swanee River—Hal McIntyre and his Orchestra (Victor 20-1667). Foster's nostalgic melody is given a very appropriate arrangement by Hal McIntyre and Sid Schwartz. There is a particularly interesting musical pattern woven by the plucked bass viol behind the muted brass and soft saxophone choirs right through the piece.

On The Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe—Johnny Mercer and The Pied Pipers with Paul Weston and his Orchestra (Capitol 195). Here is an example of how well lyricist Mercer is served by vocalist Mercer. There is not much to the music, but Johnny's know how and feeling for jazz make it worth listening to. Given the usual commercial treatment and a dull vocalist this number would be pure corn—as you probably already know.

Homesick—That's All—Skip Farrell and the Dinning Sisters (Capitol 209). This pleasant popular song introduces a newcomer among radio baritones who sings straightforwardly, and well. The sisters blend their voices into the arrangement in their usual smooth style. Neither the orchestration nor the vocalizing here is in the jazz idiom, but the song is not oversentimentalized. Good commercial stuff.

I Cried For You—Jerry Colonna (Capitol 204). The best novelty record of the month is supplied by friend Colonna. The mock seriousness of the introduction is soon disturbed by unexpected developments to which our hero pays no attention. On the reverse face he does a shouting version of the old comedy song *Bell Bottom Trousers*.

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Bessie Abott
as Lakme



FROM DUET TO SEXTET

By Stephen Fassett

PART 3

In August 1907 Victor issued the first of the Bessie Abott duets — *Mesta ognor* from *Martba* (89009), with Louise Homer. Bessie Pickens Abott was born in Heuvelton, New York, in 1878, a descendant of the famous Pickens family of South Carolina whose members distinguished themselves in the Revolutionary and Civil wars. Her father's death left the family in such straitened circumstances that she and her sister, Jessie, were forced to turn to account the talent they had displayed at charity benefits and at the drawing room entertainments of their friends. They went to New York and, from 1894 to 1897, appeared successfully in vaudeville and light opera. Of interest to record collectors is the fact that the Abott Sisters recorded several of their specialty numbers for Bettini during the late Nineties, but whatever became of these delicate wax cylinders nobody seems to know. Bessie aspired to grand opera and, in May 1897, on the advice of Jean de Reszke, went to Paris to study. Her teachers were Victor Capoul, Jacques

Bouhy — both famous singers in their younger days — and the renowned Mme. Marchesi who was the teacher of Melba, Eames and countless others of similar distinction. On December 9, 1901, Bessie made her début as Juliet at the Paris Opéra where she sang leading roles for several seasons. She returned to the United States in 1906 and, after an extensive concert tour, made her Metropolitan Opera début as Mimi in *La Bohème* on January 20, 1906. Her repertoire comprised lyric and coloratura roles and, while her voice was not a great one, she must have made an appealing heroine, for she was young, slender and pretty. After a few seasons with the Metropolitan, Bessie returned to Europe, reappeared in Paris and then sang in Lisbon, Monte Carlo, St. Petersburg and other musical centers. By 1911 she was back in the United States, touring the South and West in concert. On August 12, 1912, she assumed the role of Maid Marian in a production of *Robin Hood* which proved to be her swan song since, six weeks later, she married the sculptor, T.

Waldo Story, and retired shortly thereafter. She died in 1919.

During 1906-1907, Bessie Abbott made three cylinders for Edison and twelve discs for Victor, which sold moderately well for a time. Today Bessie Abbott recordings are likely to fetch good prices but, in my opinion, they are prized more for rarity than for intrinsic merit. At any rate, they exhibit a light soprano generally of good quality but occasionally thin at the top. This florid *Martha* duet is considered a characteristic example of her singing, and the unfamiliarity of the music lends additional appeal. As collectors of early duet recordings have learned to expect, Louise Homer's share in the proceedings is wholly admirable.

September 1907 was marked by the appearance of the first Nielsen-Constantino duets — *Parigi, o cara* from *Traviata* (74075) and *Damm! ancor* from *Faust* (74076). These and the ones that followed nearly always made pleasant listening, but the bland performances lack that particular degree of distinction which an old recording must have in order to merit the regard of a modern connoisseur. In truth, neither Nielsen nor Constantino was an artist of sufficient calibre to belong to that select group of supremely great singers who were able to survive the diminishing effect of the acoustic recording process and emerge with an impact which, even in 1945, can still make itself felt as a potent force.

Alice Nielsen was born in Nashville, Tennessee on June 7, 1876 and died in New York City on March 8, 1943. She sang and acted as a child, made her adult debut as Yum-Yum in *The Mikado* in California, 1893, and soon became famous as a prima donna in light opera, particularly in Boston. Advised to try grand opera, she went to Italy for study and made her operatic debut as Marguerite in *Faust* at the Bellini Theatre, Naples, on December 6, 1903. After singing at Covent Garden, she returned to the United States and began her American operatic career in 1905 as Norina in *Don Pasquale*. In 1908, she joined Henry Russell's San Carlo Opera company in New Orleans and a year later became one of the stars of his Boston

Opera, singing there frequently until 1913, with occasional guest appearances at the Metropolitan in New York. Like Bessie Abbott, however, she was last heard in light opera in 1917.

Florencio Constantino was born in Balboa, Spain, in 1869. A marine engineer in the navy, he later worked as a machinist on a steamship line between Spain and South America. After turning to singing as a profession, he made his debut at Montevideo, sang successfully in Buenos Aires, and subsequently appeared in many of the foremost houses of Europe. His career in the United States began in New Orleans, 1906, with Russell's San Carlo Opera Company and he was a member of the Boston Opera from its inception in 1909. In New York he sang at the Manhattan Opera. His death occurred in Mexico City on November 19, 1919.

In his time, Constantino was praised by more than one discerning American critic as a fine tenor of the old school. His acting, however, was considered rudimentary. He had a wide repertoire of lyric roles and recorded innumerable selections from it for the major European and American companies. As recorded, his voice often sounds well, but at times the tones are meagre, and lacking in vitality. His style is invariably suave sometimes charming, but his technique and musicianship are unreliable. In fact, the only consistent characteristic of Constantino on records is his inconsistency. I cannot think of a single one of his performances that could be called an unqualified success. He has his moments, to be sure, but they seem accidental rather than calculated.

In October 1907, when Schumann-Heink was 46 years old, Victor issued her recording of *Weiche, Wotan, Weiche* from *Das Rheingold* (88092), which might be called a duet because of the presence of Herbert Witherspoon singing Wotan's responses to the warning phrases of Erda. In spite of an ineffectual orchestral background, it is a highly impressive performance and an excellent reproduction of the singers' voices.

Victor offered no Red Seal recording of concerted vocal music in November 1907,

(Continued on page 328)



RECORD NOTES AND

R E V I E W S

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

GERHSWIN: *An American in Paris*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set X or MX-246, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ There are those who think that this work was the best orchestral one that Gershwin wrote. The composer may have given the impression that he thought so too, and some remarks he made about it have caused people to think he strove to be more serious here than in any other orchestral composition. Gershwin described the score as a "rhapsodic ballet," but it has some of the characteristics of a tone poem. In 1928, Gershwin visited Europe and he is said to have conceived this opus before he landed in Paris. It was characteristic of Gershwin that he would have included the proverbial taxi horns of Paris in his score

— those horns that have been the bane of many an American tourist in the French capital. *An American in Paris* is a combination of several elements, typical in my estimation of a successful Broadway composer: there is nervous tension, sentiment, gaiety, nostalgia, and a slap-dashery which gives it a distinctly mundane quality. Like all of Gershwin, it creates a striking contrast with most other music. It is at best an uneven score, a work that does not hang together too well, but it is at the same time a lot of fun, and it usually engages the imagination of most people. Its popularity in performance at summer concerts has been tremendous. I do not recall its figuring in the concert hall very often in recent years during the winter seasons. It began, however, in the main season of 1928, when Walter Damrosch played it for the first time at a concert given by his New York Symphony.

In April of 1929 Victor released its re-recording made by the Victor Symphony with Gershwin conducting. That recording was never very satisfactory, and the Victor Symphony of that period was not the organization it has become in recent years. A later recording, considerably cut, by Whiteman (for Decca) was a poor substitute for the Victor, despite its better reproduction; artistically it was nil. And so, this recording fills a gap. Rodzinski gives the work a straightforward performance, appreciable but hardly revealing any imaginative feeling for its content. The best about the set is the splendid orchestral re-

production Columbia has provided; its tonal naturalness is one of the joys of most of the new recordings of this orchestra.

—P. H. R.

GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue*; played by Oscar Levant (piano), with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy (3 sides), and *Preludes Nos. 2 and 3* (for piano); played by Mr. Levant (1 side). Columbia set X or MX-251, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ With Victor's release of its Sanromafiedler performance of the *Rhapsody in Blue* last month, we spilled quite a bit of ink. We might have known a newer set was lurking round the corner, but the fact is no intimation of its existence had come our way. In June 1941, Columbia issued a performance of this work by Alec Templeton and André Kostelanetz and his orchestra, which was a rather disappointing affair. Neither the pianist nor the conductor showed themselves *en rapport* with the score. Here, Oscar Levant undeniably proves himself the most sympathetic and understanding interpreter of Gershwin's music, and it is he who will command the admiration of countless record buyers. Ormandy gives him splendid support and co-operation, but I am not convinced that Ormandy is the ideal conductor for the score. The orchestral part seems too weighty at times, and the opening lacks true spontaneity. It will always remain a moot question whether a symphony orchestra can achieve the true jazz spirit embodied in this work, and the dark-hued quality of the Philadelphia Orchestra raises another question. It is not a matter of perfect accord but of complete freedom—the ability to create an illusion of improvisation and insouciance at the right time. Levant has the spirit of the music, the right degree of nervous tension, the carefree quality that assures spontaneity. His easy-going manner hides his lack of technical mastery. Comparing his performance with Sanroma's, I find Levant's is more facile; but the Bostonian's is nevertheless admirable for its clarity of attack, its precision of line, and its greater technical competence. One wonders what Levant and Whiteman (the latter in his heyday) might have done with

this score, particularly with a large orchestra.

Tonally, the reproduction here is excellent, but two sides of the recording (the first and third) gave me some trouble; the record surfaces played havoc with several different needles, which resulted in frequent needle chatter.

As an encore, Levant plays two of Gershwin's three piano *Preludes*. Whether or not the present performances are a redubbing of Levant's earlier ones I could not say. It will be recalled that the pianist played all three *Preludes* in his album called *Recital of Modern Music* (Columbia set 508). As was previously noted, he proves a persuasive spokesman for these pieces, playing them, in fact, better than Gershwin once did on an earlier Columbia disc (No. 7192).

—P. H. R.

GERSHWIN (arr. Bennett): *Porgy and Bess—A Symphonic Picture*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia set M or MM-572, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Last month we had a recording of Bennett's symphonic arrangement from *Porgy and Bess* played by Fabien Sevitzky and the Indianapolis Symphony (Victor set 999). Here is another duplication we did not expect. That Reiner's feeling for the ideas contained in this score is a little more perceptive and idiomatic than that shown in the Sevitzky set is understandable when we know the history of the score, something we neglected to mention in our previous review. Several years ago, Reiner asked Bennett to make an arrangement of the principal music of *Porgy and Bess*. We quote Mr. Bennett's remarks on his work, as given in Paul Affelder's excellent notes in this album: "Dr. Reiner selected the portions of the opera that he wanted to play and also set the sequence of the excerpts. He expressed his ideas as to instrumentation, wishing to make generous use of saxophones and banjo, and to dispense with Gershwin's pet instrument, the piano. I proceeded not only to follow Dr. Reiner's ideas faithfully, but also to remain completely loyal to George's harmonic and orchestral inten-

tions. In other words, although carrying out Dr. Reiner's approach, I have been careful to do what I knew—after many years of association with Gershwin—Gershwin would like as a symphonic version of his music." Thus, one feels Reiner has had a long interest in this score and a major part in its existence; furthermore he has been playing the work since February 1943. Therefore, it should not be surprising to find his treatment of the variable aspects of the score more persuasive than those conveyed in the Victor recording.

The material Reiner selected and Bennett arranged from the opera is as follows: *Scene in Catfish Row* (with Peddlers' calls)—Opening of Act 3—Opening of Act 1—*Summertime*—*I got plenty of nuttin'*—*Storm Music*—*Bess, you is my woman now*—*The Picnic Party*—*There's a boat that's leavin' soon for New York*—*It aint necessarily so*—Finale. As we previously remarked, the symphonic arrangement is an adroit one. Bennett deserves praise, but the work seems a little too long for its own good, and as persuasive as Reiner's performance remains it does not succeed in altering this impression. Sevitzyky apparently did not share Reiner's admiration for the banjo, for he does not use it in *I got plenty of nuttin'*. Far from being an intrusion in the concert hall, to our way of thinking, the banjo adds to the idiomatic qualities of this selection.

The recording here is excellently contrived, but so too was the Sevitzyky one.

—P. H. R.

STRAUSS: *Death and Transfiguration* (*Tod und Verklärung*), Opus 24; played by the New York City Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M or DM-1006, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Stokowski's last Victor recording of this tone poem was made in 1934 with the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was in every way preferable to the one he made with the All American Orchestra in 1942. Since the conductor is no longer associated with the Philadelphia Orchestra and has taken over the New York City

Symphony, we may expect some duplications of what he did previously. Duplications of this sort are all very well if they show marked improvement in recording technique. To my way of thinking, the present recording does not offer startling improvements over that of 1934. There is perhaps a slight margin in dynamics—the *pianissimi* seem softer, which, of course, makes the *fortissimi* more effective, but the latter are not by any means unusual. One would have expected the clarity of instrumentation here to have been more pronounced than in the earlier Victor set, but this is not the case. The horn section of the New York City Symphony can hardly compete with that of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and despite the appreciable instrumental solo playing here few of the soloists can challenge their competitors in the famous Quaker City orchestra. What Stokowski can do with an orchestra is almost legendary, and it should be noted that he has improved the present ensemble no end in his recent association with it. The sumptuous sound we have always been used to in a Stokowski recording is fully apparent here, and his knowledge of reproduction has unquestionably aided the recording engi-

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Of all Strauss' tone poems, this one seems the most dated. It belongs to the composer's early youth, callow youth one is tempted to say, and it reflects the decadent, sickly sentiment of the middle 19th century. This anguish of a dying man is as old-fashioned as antimacassars and hand-painted china, and it palls after a time. But sentimental youth seems still to derive comfort—or whatever one wants to call it—from the programmatic connotations of this score. More than a decade ago, the late Philip Hale of Boston contended that "the anguish of the dying man who does not make the graceful and gracious apology of Charles II on his deathbed, no longer moves us; his recollections seem sentimental and vapid." Through the years I have grown to agree with Mr. Hale. There is more endurable music in the composer's earlier tone poem, *Don Juan*, and *Till Eulenspiegel* definitely overshadows all his tone poems. There is too much of effect for the sake of effect in *Death and Transfiguration*, too much of the stuff "designed deliberately to make the bourgeois stare," as Hale has succinctly put it. That Mr. Stokowski does not agree with these remarks would seem to be apparent in the care he lavishes on the score; it offers him opportunities which he has long shown definite predilections for: sensuous tonal sound, a blend of sombre brooding tone and virtuoso expansiveness, punctuated with the swells and recessions that are typical of a Stokowski performance.

—P. H. R.

Concerto

SAINT-SAËNS: *Concerto No. 4 in C minor, Opus 44*; played by Robert Casadesus (piano) and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M or MM-566, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ This concerto, one of three by Saint-Saëns that are still included in the repertory of leading pianists, is less exciting

than his *G minor* (No. 2), which he is said to have written in three weeks' time for a concert being conducted by Anton Rubinstein in Paris in 1868. It is well constructed and scored to give a maximum of orchestral display for its time. Its thematic material, however, is not too inspired but rather devised for its malleability; a great deal of the piano writing is little better than exercise material. In March 1938, I reviewed a performance of this work by Alfred Cortot and an unnamed orchestra, under the direction of Charles Münch, and pointed out that those who admire the composer's *Third Symphony* will find a close affinity to it in this work. Tovey contends that the concerto is more attractive in theme and more compact in form than the symphony. The cyclic pattern is also followed in the concerto, but here the composer's treatment of his melodic material is "in a simple but resourceful variation form." The work is divided into two parts intended to be played as one long movement without interruption. The first part opens with a fast section which later gives way to an Andante. Part two begins with an Allegro vivace, in the nature of a scherzo, with a striking second theme. A short Andante follows, and then comes the best part of the work, in my opinion, a brilliant Allegro in which the composer ingeniously reuses his material.

Saint-Saëns was more interested in achieving purity of form and perfection of style than in expressing any profound emotions. While the themes are not distinguished one should not overlook the fact that what the composer has done with them shows his cleverness. The work has elegant lines, admirable proportions and inventiveness, but it lacks emotional power.

I do not find that Casadesus' performance effaces the memory of Cortot's; the objectivity of both artists is a decided virtue in music of this kind since there is little emotionalism to invite a more personalized participation. Casadesus fares better where orchestral background is concerned; Rodzinski gives him a smooth-flowing, cleanly articulated accompaniment, which is marred only by some sub-

duing of orchestral counterpoint to favor the pianist. The dynamic values of the score are far from satisfactory in the recording; almost every pianissimo is a mezzo-forte. Casadesu's super-refined style of playing is thus often intensified so that one gets only a small idea of the variety of tone of which he is capable in the concert hall. The quality of the reproduction is otherwise realistic. —P.H.R.

Keyboard

FRANCK: *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*; played by Artur Rubinstein (piano). Victor set M or DM-1104, two disc, price \$2.50.

▲ Even if the sponsors of this recording agreed with Cortot's views on this work, as outlined in his book *French Piano Music*, which imply that Cortot regards his interpretation as one of studied perfection, there would be every reason to replace Cortot's recording because it is all of fifteen years old. Piano reproduction has advanced greatly in the past eight years; it is not a matter of tonal realism only but of greater clarity of line and dynamics. Rubinstein may or may not bring more nuance to his playing of this work than does Cortot (the latter's earlier recording is good but hardly as tonally rich); one would have to hear these two pianists side by side in reproduction that was comparable to substantiate this fact. A more recent recording, by Ego Petri (Columbia set X-173, October 1940) has long eclipsed the Cortot version by virtue of its finer tonal qualities.

To review this work adequately, it would seem to me one should take into consideration some of Cortot's remarks as well as those of others. Unquestionably, Frank's most significant piano works are this one and his *Prelude, Aria, and Finale*. Of the two, the first has achieved greater popularity, perhaps because with all its quasi-classicism its inherent emotionalism and even style are not distantly removed from the familiar Franck of the *Symphony* and

the *Variations Symphonique*. Franck wrote this work late in life, at a time when his creative powers were at their height. It represents a maturity of thought and purpose. The *Symphony* had already been composed. The texture of this music is rich; the mood is that blend of mysticism and romanticism which was characteristic of its composer. Although pianistic, the music still recalls the organ, and I know at least one organist who has essayed its performance on his instrument. The French composer Pierné thought it possessed orchestral texture and accordingly arranged at least one section of it — the *Chorale*.

Saint-Saëns, who has been called the man who was principally responsible for elevating French instrumental music to a place of honor, did not think very well of this work. But Saint-Saëns had not the emotional depth of Franck; theirs were decidedly opposing schools of thought. Saint-Saëns claimed this work was "uncouth, tiresome to play, in which the chorale, was no chorale, and the fugue

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no fugue." Cortot, disagreeing heartily with Saint-Saëns, takes the latter's remarks as a springboard from which to launch upon his discussion of the music. The execution of this work, he contends, "opens out to the pianist who undertakes it a vast field of highly interesting problems. They have as much to do with its underlying sentiment and the exact shades of expression necessary to it, as with the technical difficulties it sets up. A serious pianist would never be satisfied only to give what one might call a broadly architectural reading; otherwise he would be grossly misunderstanding what constitutes the novel beauty of the work." Form, he goes on to say, was something which Franck did not take too literally, to him it was no more than the "physical body of the essential work of art, meant to serve as the tangible outward form clothing the idea, which he [Franck] described as the soul of the music." Exaggerated sentiment and *rubato* are completely alien to Franck, says Cortot,

Considering the classical derivation of Franck's use of form in this work, we can understand and appreciate Cortot's remarks. But when Cortot tells us that the composer's lyrical vein, "broad and free as it is, has not that personal, intimate touch which releases the rare abandon of Chopin and Schumann," he differs from others who regard Franck as a highly personal composer, more subjective than objective; and if one admits his subjectivity one admits the quality of intimacy. To be sure, we must take into consideration that style here is derived from the classics: the *Prelude* suggests a Bachian influence — the Bach of the *Chromatic Fantasy* — yet harmonically it is characteristically Franckian. The working out of the fugue is admirably accomplished to a certain point but Franck chafes to change it toward the end, rather than completing its academic course, and so he brings in the *Chorale* again. I have never thought that Franck was completely happy handling the fugal form, with him it has none of the strength of purpose of a Bach fugue; perhaps the composer was wiser than some would have us believe to end it in his own fashion. That finale

indeed provides a brilliant peroration.

Neither Cortot nor Petri nor Rubinstein makes us conscious that this music has its technical difficulties. Of the three players, Rubinstein leans more toward the romantic elements in the music, and his consistently singing line is of decided advantage in the *Prelude*. Cortot states that "one disproportionate outburst of emotional feeling—and the ideal curve that encompasses the whole work is spoilt." I rather suspect that Cortot would accuse Rubinstein of too much emotional license, but I do feel that a lot of people will find this music more rewardingly expressive in this performance than in Cortot's. Petri gives a magnificent reading, outlining the counterpoint superbly, but a great deal of the emotional element is not fully exploited. Petri's reading is dangerously near to a "broadly architectural" one; but he nonetheless plays with an expressive splendor that commands our respect. Rubinstein has become so closely identified with the music of Chopin that one is not surprised to find his interpretation reminiscent of his Chopin playing. His effortless, clean-cut playing, and his realization of light and shade are persuasive qualities which will please a great many people. He most certainly refutes Saint-Saëns' assertion that the work is "uncouth and tiresome to play." Moreover, he has splendid recording to advance the cause for his performance, and his recording has undoubtedly helped him clarify the brilliant closing pages which were not similarly clear in either the Petri or Cortot versions.

— P. H. R.

Voice

BRAHMS: *Cradle Song*, *Opus 49, No. 4*; and REGER: *The Virgin's Slumber Song*, *Opus 76*; sung in English by Blanche Thebom (mezzo-soprano), with Victor String Orchestra, conducted by Macklin Marrow. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1173, price 75c.

▲ Miss Thebom is a richly endowed singer; her voice has true tonal beauty and expressive appeal. She sings both of these songs in better than average English trans-

lations with admirable diction. To the true lover of lieder, however, no translation can ever serve these songs satisfactorily, and no instrumental background other than the piano is regarded favorably. But not everyone speaks a foreign language and not everyone takes the trouble of looking up a translation of a lied; hence there is a group of record buyers who have been clamoring for such songs sung in English translation. Miss Thebom's record will therefore serve a good cause.

In my opinion, these lieder are best served by piano accompaniments. Their tender and intimate character is best preserved by the household instrument. It should be noted that the string orchestra is not obtrusive, indeed it is most discreetly handled by Mr. Marrow, but future records of this kind by Miss Thebom would be best made with the original piano accompaniments. —P. G.

GERSHWIN SHOW HITS: *The Man I Love* from *Strike Up the Band*; *Do It Again* from *The French Doll*; *Love Walked In* from *The Goldwyn Follies*; *Someone to Watch Over Me* from *Oh, Kay*; sung by Dinah Shore, with orchestra conducted by Albert Sack. Victor Show Piece Set 5, two 10-inch discs, price \$1.75.

▲ Miss Shore does nothing unusual with these songs; she is simply herself, and this is about all her admirers probably ask. Popularity such as Miss Shore has earned takes a lot of effort out of an artist's career; it is not expected of successful radio and moving-picture singers that they differentiate very much in their style of singing. Miss Shore is called "America's Singing Sweetheart", and she is said to represent the average American girl to thousands of service men and civilians alike. The "average" singer would not be expected to strive for any distinctive artistry even in the popular field. "Just be yourself, dearie," as one movie director once said to another popular singer, "and everybody will be happy." And I suspect everybody who admires Miss Shore's singing will be very happy about her Gershwin songs. But I, for one, would prefer a more sophisti-

cated style than Miss Shore's in these songs. —P. G.

RODGERS: *Carousel—June is bustin' out all over*; sung by Thomas L. Thomas (baritone) with chorus, and *If I Loved You*; sung by Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano) and Thomas L. Thomas, with Al Goodman and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1174, price 75c.

RODGERS: *Carousel—What's the use of wond'rin*; sung by Miss Merriman, and *You'll Never Walk Alone*; sung by Miss Merriman and Mr. Thomas (with chorus) and Al Goodman and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1175, price 75c.

▲ That talented team Hammerstein and Rodgers have come up with another smash hit in *Carousel*. The formula for such success is laid out very deftly by Oscar Hammerstein II. He knows the value of a good lyric, especially if it recaptures some of the appeal that helped make many an older song a success. Thus, in *What's the use of wond'rin* Hammerstein recalls *Can't help Lovin' dat Man* from Kern's *Show Boat*. Rodgers is sufficiently individual to steer clear of a double reminiscence, but the word-patterns of the songs are very similar. In *You'll never walk Alone*, Hammerstein plays on popular emotions very cleverly—if you have hope in your heart, you'll never walk alone. And Rodgers invents a good tune for this lyric, which makes it one of the best numbers of the show. *Carousel* is not another *Oklahoma*; the folk tinge of the latter is not in it, but it has tunes quite as good and quite as appealing. The infectious *June is bustin' out all over* is as irresistible as *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*, and *If I Loved You* has all the requisite romantic sentiment to make it as popular as *People will say we're in love*.

Decca has released an album set of *Carousel* with the Broadway cast. It is a good album, marred only by the poor surfaces of Decca records. But original casts by no means have the last say on performance, as the present records certainly prove. Thomas seems a natural for these songs and Miss Merriman proves a good

second. His singing is manly and spontaneous and always "in the groove." I like the way Miss Merriman handles her solo, it has a warm feminine appeal, and her part in the two duets adds to their enjoyment.

Goodman gives the singers good support and the chorus thrown in for good measure fills out the pattern. The recording is well done. —P.G.

SCHWARTZ: *You and the Night and the Music*; and YOUMANS: *Time on my Hands, You in my Arms*; sung by Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by H. Leopold Spitalny. Victor disc 11-8813, price \$1.00.

▲ Miss Merriman is a versatile singer; she has appeared as soloist with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Toscanini, and with other symphonic organizations, and has established a reputation for herself as a radio singer of popular songs. There is a sultry quality to her voice, which it should be noted she does not over-exploit. Style in a musical performance, our Mr. Miller once said, is like charm in a woman. Quoting the sagacious Maggie Shand, he added: "If you have it, you don't need anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have." Miss Merriman has style, and she does equal justice to popular and classical selections. Some of our readers may recall her singing in Toscanini's production of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* last April. At that time, she showed her versatility and her musicianship. In the present selections, which introduce Miss Merriman as a soloist on records, her vocal style is slightly marred by a bit too much vibrato, which may be due to nervousness. The present performances are in the familiar radio pattern, with lush solos by members of the orchestra and a typical radio instrumental background, ably conducted by Mr. Spitalny, an old hand at this game. Miss Merriman's diction is good, which adds to the pleasure of her performances. The reproduction in both songs is satisfactory.

—P.G.

RUSSIAN SONGS: *Song of Russia* (Strimer-Lebedeff-Kumach); *Lullaby* (Tol-

stoy-Balmont); *It's All the Same* (Milutin-Solodar); *Wicked Wife*; *Beloved City* (Bogoslavsky-Dolmatovsky); *Lemonade*; sung by Nina Tarasova with Orchestral accompaniment. Kismet album C-17, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ Nina Tarasova is a singularly gifted singer of Russian folk and other songs. We remember this little Russian singer for her recitals as long ago as 1919, when she was enthusiastically acclaimed by her audiences. One of New York's leading critics at that time called her a Russian Yvette Guilbert, which was high praise indeed but not undeserved. Time has dealt kindly with this singer's voice; it is still a serviceable organ, and her ability still to make what she does intensely human is borne out by these records. These are not great songs; they are songs of and for the people. Miss Tarasova, however, knows how to make them live. It is unfortunate for this reason that the sponsors of these records do not provide a leaflet with the set, giving information about the singer and translations of the songs. Her first two songs, the *Lullaby* in particular, do not ask for knowledge of the texts for enjoyment, but when it comes to songs like *It's All the Same*, *Wicked Wife* and *Lemonade* we feel we are missing a lot by knowing nothing about the words. Listeners who understand Russian will of course get every word, because the singer has good diction. Since Kismet puts out other records of Russian music without information it would seem it was appealing mainly to Russian buyers, but it is a pity to confine an album like this just to Russian-speaking record buyers.

The album has a picture of the artist on the cover which gives us the impression of a young singer of our own day. The use of a youthful picture is surely the prerogative of an artist, but it is misleading to those who knew her years ago. The recording here is acceptably done, and the orchestra behind the singer is a good one of its kind. —P.G.

(Since writing the above, we have learned that Miss Tarasova is still concertizing, and further that the Kismet Record Co.

is considering the issuance of a leaflet with the set containing translations of the songs. —P.G.)

STRICTLY G. I. — Soldier Songs and Parodies; sung by Cpl. Milton Larkin, T/Sgt. Robert Briody; Sgt. Jules Munshin; Pvt. Buddy Moreno, S/Sgt. Johnny Messner; Wac Sgt. Adele Clark; Kenneth Spencer (USO); T/4 Bert Buhrman; T/4 Buddy Weed; and Pfc. Artie Ens. Asch Record set 455, four 10-inch discs, price \$4.50.

▲ There's nothing sacred in the Army; a tune is a tune and if someone's smart enough to put words to it reflecting a mental condition of the boys it is bound to become popular with them. Sgt. Hy Zaret is responsible for most of the parodies and the lyrics in this collection of G. I. material. He says in his foreword here, "They say that a gripeing Army is a good, fighting army. If that is so then our military leaders have little to worry about, for among G.I.'s 'gripe-itis' is more common than the common cold." The language may vary with guys coming from different sections of the country, but the ailment prevails; it "starts at the induction center, and the G.I. is never free from its grip until he changes the color and style of his suit". We've all heard about the boys in the Army eating steaks and chicken—the dearth of these delectable morsels at home has caused a gripeing that every respectable citizen indulges in to a great extent. Believe it or not, the G.I. has a gripe against too much chicken — and Sgt. Hy Zaret and Sgt. B. Landes have told us all about this in their *Chicken Blues*. One line of this song, "They dish it out until you want to shout", tells the whole story. Particularly amusing is the old gripe against K.P., which is sung to the tune of *Caissons Go Rolling Along*. *Hungry Dinky Parlay Voo* turns up with new verses; in ray day the lines we sung would not have been printable; but the Hays office wouldn't complain about the new verses. Zaret supplied a good line when he wrote: "The Japs are such a funny race, parley voo . . . they cut their throats to save their face, Hinky dinky parley voo".

The G. I.'s have a parody on *Aint Misbehavin'*, on *Man on the Flying Trapeze*, and on *Margie* (called *Laundry*) with some crude but probably factual words. There are original songs called *Gee, But It's Great to Be in the Army*; *The Army Taught Me How*; *It's a Helluva "Glory Road" for the Infantry*; *Saga of the Sad Sack*; and *Counting the Days*, all reflecting the G.I. state of mind.

The production of this album was entrusted to Sgt. Hy Zaret by one of the directors of the Asch Record Co. Zaret tells us that he had no trouble assembling a group of singing G.I.'s, but he was careful to get G.I. talent only, because "a Broadway production was the last thing we wanted; the G.I. 'feel' of it was what we aimed for . . . The recording took place on two evenings, was completely informal in character, and achieved the goal we had set ourselves, namely, to produce an album of G. I. material, performed by G.I.'s as it might have taken place at the PX, the barracks, or the 'Res. Hall'".

In the group performing will be noted former band leader Johnny Messner and Buddy Moreno, vocalist for Harry James. The proceeds of the album sale are being donated to the National Service Fund of Disabled American Veterans. Some of the songs were written for the Music Branch of the Army Special Services and have been used in various army projects such

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as the Army Hit Parade. The parodies are played and sung, we are told, by soldiers the world over. It is our belief that the album will have a wide sale — anyway it should — its honesty and simplicity preclude critical comments on the material; moreover the ordinary soldier is not a guy to be singing the classics.

— P. G.

Broadcast

Corwin: *On a Note of Triumph*. A C.B.S. Broadcast commemorating V-E Day. Martin Gabel, Narrator, with Supporting cast. Music by Bernard Herrmann. Orchestra conducted by Lud Gluskin. Columbia set M or MM-575, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ Corwin's widely praised broadcast to celebrate V-E Day was first heard over the Columbia Broadcasting System, Tuesday, May 8, 1945, from 9:00 to 10:00 P. M. So enthusiastic was its reception that CBS repeated it the following Sunday, from 2:00 to 3:00 P.M. Writing about this extraordinary program I feel an inadequate command of words — what others have said comes to mind and the enthusiasm and praise that it stirred in me are dwarfed by a rehearing of that famous broadcast, celebrating an event of major importance in history. Some men, called upon to celebrate a great event, wax oratorical, some resort to platitudes, others just talk and say a lot that is soon forgotten, like most of the day-in and day-out radio broadcasts we tune off. Not so Corwin; he speak the vernacular of the boys in the trenches, and he grows eloquent as a poet profoundly stirred by a great event.

On a Note of Triumph has been published in book form by Simon and Schuster, and has already gone into more than one edition. But reading Corwin's script does not stir you as hearing it from these records will. It is vastly more effective, as indeed it should be, where the musical background and the different voices and sound effects are heard. How preeminently right the whole thing is for its intended medium is borne out by listening to these

records, when one gets the human touch of the living drama. The records prove, if proof is required, that Corwin is, as Robert Sherwood has said, "undoubtedly the finest writer developed in radio in the United States . . . one of the most eloquent, vigorous and tireless exponents of the cause of liberation."

—James Norwood

Book Review

(Continued from page 308)

his choral compositions on records.

That Dr. Davison has a keenly analytical mind is borne out in the way he has laid out his book. His chapters cover: (1) Choral Clefs, Range, and Grouping; (2) Technical Fundamentals; (3) Idiomatic Choral Practices; (4) Polyvocal Writing; (5) Accompaniment; (6) Special Choirs; (7) The Text; (8) Form. In which the author has given a list of Of great value is the book's Appendix, publishers, an index of collections, and an index of composers and compositions. The book covers its subject from early choral writing down to modern times.

—James Norwood.

FROM DUET TO SEXTET

(Continued from page 318)

but in December the year that had seen the publication of so many memorable discs of this type was concluded with the announcement of the only duet Marcella Sembrich and Emilio de Gogorza ever put on wax. De Gogorza had made his concert debut with Sembrich in 1897 and their record of *Doute de la lumière* from *Hamlet* (89010 or IRCC 48) has value as a memento of their collaboration of ten years earlier. However, I must confess that I have always found it a disappointment, both as a performance and as a reproduction. By 1907 Sembrich was past her prime and her voice never recorded well anyway. De Gogorza's singing has merit, but his voice never had the marvelous freedom and amplitude that make the Ruffo recording of 1908 so outstanding.

(To Be Continued)

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111 West 52nd Street

Record Collector's Exchange
76 West 48th Street

G. SCHIRMER, INC.
3 East 43rd Street

STEINWAY & SONS
109 West 57th Street

Harry Sultan's Record Shop
26 East 23rd Street

SUN RADIO COMPANY
212 Fulton Street

Los Angeles, California
BIRKEL-RICHARDSON CO.
730 West 7th Street

GATEWAY TO MUSIC
3305 Wilshire Boulevard

San Francisco, California
SHERMAN, CLAY & CO.
Kearney and Sutter Street

Chicago, Illinois
CABLE PIANO CO. - Record Shop
228 South Wabash Ave.

LYON & HEALY
Wabash and Jackson

Indianapolis, Indiana
L. S. AYRES & CO.
1-15 Washington Street

PEARSON CO., INC.

128 N. Pennsylvania Street

Baltimore, Maryland

THE G. FRED KRANZ MUSIC CO.
327 North Charles Street

Boston, Massachusetts

MOSHER MUSIC CO., Inc.
181 Tremont Street

M. STEINERT & SONS
162 Boylston Street

Minneapolis, Minnesota

SCHMITT MUSIC CENTER
86-88 South 10th Street

St. Louis, Missouri

Aeolian Company of Missouri
1004 Olive Street

THE RECORD SHOP,
McCurdy & Co., Inc.
Main at Elm, Rochester, New York
Cincinnati, Ohio

THE WILLIS MUSIC CO.
124 East 4th Street

Cleveland, Ohio

G. SCHIRMER MUSIC CO.
43-45 The Arcade

Philadelphia, Pa.

THE RECORD SHOP
251 South 15th Street

H. ROYER SMITH CO.
10th and Walnut Streets

Milwaukee 2, Wisc.

HELEN GUNNIS MUSIC SHOP
765 North Broadway

Charleston, W. Va.

CALPERIN MUSIC CO.
17 Capitol Street

Toronto, Canada

PROMENADE MUSIC CENTRE
83 Bloor St. West

London, England

RIMINGTON, VAN WYCK, LTD.
42-43 Cranbourn Street

